

Gwaii Engineering



Gwaii Engineering is breaking new ground with its engineering and environmental consulting for First Nations across BC and Canada. Its innovative pairing of new technologies with a traditional, culturally sensitive approach to Indigenous communities and economic development is providing new and rapidly expanding opportunities for this small company based out of Greater Victoria.

Operations

Gwaii Engineering is a majority Aboriginal-owned and operated consulting firm providing services in the areas of civil engineering, sustainable housing/development, infrastructure and energy-related projects, and planning and environmental consulting on contaminated sites.

Year founded 2017

Primary Market Vancouver Island, BC coast

Employees 8 full-time

Q&A

Corey Brown & Mike Achtem | Principals

www.gwaiieng.com

What is unique about your business?

Our approach. We've moved out of traditional consulting in to a role that's a bit more holistic in our approach to communities, it's more about that engagement piece. One of the things we're starting to do as part of that approach is being almost part of our client's community. We're part of the celebrations, enjoying and spending time with them.

“ We find, in every community that we visit, new opportunities that we didn't envision getting in to previously. So we haven't put a limit on what we want to be. ”

Corey Brown

How successful is your approach?

It's a large capital investment that we've made the past few years, visiting these communities. There are probably more up-front costs but it's something you just have to commit to and it's the approach we found best. A lot of it is just building relationships and trust, then the business tends to come.

What are the biggest challenges you face in your projects?

A lot of it is the remoteness. A lot of community members come from villages that are only couple of hundred people. So to open up economic development opportunities where they are from is a challenge.

How is your practice evolving?

Over the last six months we have moved in to 3-D modelling and rendering of development sites. We can get images from satellites and create conceptual plans so that Chief and council can actually visualize things without us ever going to the site. It's a unique resource that enables them to apply for funding at a really early stage of a project, without significant spending.

Tell us about one of your recent successes.

We're trying to write in to a lot of our contracts some ways to build capacity in the Nations through job shadowing. It's something we wouldn't traditionally do in the consulting world but we're making an effort to engage and help them long-term. A couple of months ago, one of our clients, the Sechelt Nation, told us that what won us the contract with them is building these intangibles in to what we do. They wanted to work with us because this was important to them.

